



[www.westernchanfellowship.org](http://www.westernchanfellowship.org)  
December 2014

## Newsletter 29

### Retreat Programme 2015

Please refer to the website at [www.w-c-f.org/Q342](http://www.w-c-f.org/Q342) for the latest updates.

#### **14<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> February: Silent Illumination 7-night Retreat (fully booked)**

**Leader: Simon Child. Venue: Maenllwyd, Wales**

Silent Illumination is a profound meditation practice which leads to a mind of great calmness and insight, using ancient Chinese Zen methods which are just as applicable to the modern West. This seven-night silent retreat is an opportunity to learn and deepen this practice through intensive meditation, with instruction and personal guidance by individual interviews with an experienced teacher. Whether or not a breakthrough to Enlightenment may occur, establishing a practice gives a firm basis for subsequent ongoing mindfulness in everyday life.

#### **7<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> March: Western Zen 5-night Retreat**

**Leader: Hilary Richards. Venue: Maenllwyd, Wales**

Who am I? Thoroughly confronting this question can take us directly to the centre of our being. Over the course of this five-day retreat you will investigate the question "Who am I?" within a standard retreat framework, using silent meditation in conjunction with a unique method of verbal inquiry. This format allows you to use words to go beyond words and thereby enter the main gate of Chan.

The intensive nature of this process of inquiry drives each practitioner into a self-presentation that is difficult to experience in other ways. To guide and support you, personal interviews with the teachers are offered regularly throughout the retreat. With whole-hearted engagement this retreat may lead to the acceptance of self, the experience of "self at ease," and may even provide an opportunity for direct insight into the ground of being.

### **4<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> April: Shattering the Great Doubt 7-night Retreat**

**Leader: Simon Child. Venue: Maenllwyd, Wales**

The ancient Chinese Zen practices of investigating Huatou and Gongan (Koan) are best practised in a supportive environment such as this intensive silent Chan retreat. As one becomes deeply absorbed in the practice, mental constructions drop away and one is confronted by a realisation that one does not know the nature of existence and one's fundamental assumptions of life are groundless. Staying with and cultivating this 'doubt', it can become all-consuming 'Great doubt' which may 'shatter', giving a direct insight into reality which may be what is known as an Enlightenment experience.

### **23<sup>rd</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> May: Silent Illumination 7-night Retreat**

**Leader: Jake Lyne. Venue: Bala Brook Retreat Centre, Devon**

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### **30<sup>th</sup> May - 7<sup>th</sup> June: Connected Practice**

**Enhance your practice in your own environment**

Co-ordinator Hilary Richards

Join us in a commitment for a period of connected and enhanced practice. We will undertake this in our daily lives, whether at home or in the workplace, with the silent support of knowing that we are not practising alone. We intend to raise the tempo of our practice for this period, increasing our capacity to be aware in our daily lives. A Mindfulness Bell will be rung at noon every day, when all participants may pause and be joined in the silence that the bell marks. Members of our Sangha may use this opportunity in different and creative ways. Open to all.

To join in email: [connected-practice@westernchanfellowship.org](mailto:connected-practice@westernchanfellowship.org) or phone 0117 3300581

### **27th June – 2nd July: Emotional Awareness Retreat 5-night retreat**

**Leader: Hilary Richards. Venue: Maenllwyd, Wales**

Travel the Great Way on this workshop retreat inspired by the teachings of Ken Jones. We will work with emotional awareness as a fundamental Chan life practice. Rising early each day, the retreat will include teaching, silence, meditation and periods for exercise. There will be both individual and group work to encourage awareness of feelings, allowing time for exploration and understanding of emotional experience.

## **31<sup>st</sup> July – 9<sup>th</sup> August: Shattering the Great Doubt 9-night Retreat**

**Leader: Simon Child. Venue: Hourne Farm, E. Sussex**

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## **1<sup>st</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> August: Western Zen 5-night Retreat**

**Leader: Jake Lyne. Venue: Maenllwyd, Wales**

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## **11<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> September: Silent Illumination 9-night Retreat**

**Leader: Simon Child. Venue: Maenllwyd, Wales**

Silent Illumination is a profound meditation practice which leads to a mind of great calmness and insight, using ancient Chinese Zen methods which are just as applicable to the modern West. This seven-night silent retreat is an opportunity to learn and deepen this practice through intensive meditation, with instruction and personal guidance by individual interviews with an experienced teacher. Whether or not a breakthrough to Enlightenment may occur, establishing a practice gives a firm basis for subsequent ongoing mindfulness in everyday life.

## **7<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> November: Shattering the Great Doubt 7-night Retreat**

**Leader: Simon Child. Venue: Maenllwyd, Wales**

The ancient Chinese Zen practices of investigating Huatou and Gongan (Koan) are best practised in a supportive environment such as this intensive silent Chan retreat. As one becomes deeply absorbed in the practice, mental constructions drop away and one is confronted by a realisation that one does not know the nature of existence and one's fundamental assumptions of life are groundless. Staying with and cultivating this 'doubt', it can become all-consuming 'Great doubt' which may 'shatter', giving a direct insight into reality which may be what is known as an Enlightenment experience.

## **5<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> December: Western Zen 5-night Retreat**

**Leader: Fiona Nuttall. Venue: Maenllwyd, Wales**

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### **Changes to Retreat Booking Conditions**

We have made two changes to our cancellation policy. Cancellations within two weeks of a retreat will result in forfeit of the entire fee; previously it was 50% of the fee. The other change is that we may still offer a refund, after deducting an administration charge, if there are significant compassionate grounds for a cancellation, but only with independent evidence such as a medical certificate, and even then this is at our discretion. Previously we would have offered a refund if a request was made in writing on compassionate grounds, without the requirement for independent verification.

The reason for this change is that we have noticed an increase in late cancellations recently. We are not alone, other Buddhist organisations have noticed the same problem. Many of these cancellations are for genuine reasons, but it seems likely that some people book in order to reserve a place for themselves in case they decide to come. Whilst people have emailed to claim significant compassionate grounds, some have not given any details, e.g. "I was not able to attend due to significant compassionate grounds", which leaves us wondering how significant those compassionate grounds were. Rather than tasking our admin secretary with an investigation to establish the reasons in more detail, we have opted for placing the burden of proof on the person cancelling, hence the need for independent evidence.

Many of our retreats are overbooked with a waiting list. Late cancellations don't usually give us time to alert people on the waiting list and so places that could have been filled by people who are keen to come on retreat are left empty. This is a shame and something we are keen to avoid.

More details at: <http://w-c-f.org/Q303>

### **Mailings**

If you no longer wish to receive postal mailings, please help us save printing and postage costs by notifying [admin@westernchanfellowship.org](mailto:admin@westernchanfellowship.org)

## Day Retreats

Several local groups arrange day retreats and other events from time to time. See the website events page <http://w-c-f.org/Q342> and individual group's pages at <http://w-c-f.org/Q3> for details of events not available to list when this newsletter went to print.

- Manchester Day Retreats 1<sup>st</sup> February and additional dates later in the year.
- York Day Retreat in Spring, date to be confirmed, refer to their webpage.
- Exeter Day Retreats 28<sup>th</sup> February and 9<sup>th</sup> May
- Bristol 18<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> April: Fiona Nuttall will run a two-day non-residential retreat in Bristol. For further details contact Pat Simmons [patsimmons.cet22@yahoo.com](mailto:patsimmons.cet22@yahoo.com)

## Western Chan Fellowship AGM 2015

This will be held at Oddfellows Hall in Bristol on the morning of Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> February. Full details, including agenda, minutes, nomination forms, etc will be posted on the website members area soon. To access these, login to the website then visit <http://w-c-f.org/Q618>

There will be elections for Secretary and for one committee member, so if you wish to be nominated for one of these posts check the pages soon for nomination forms.

## Other Events of Interest

The following events are not run by the WCF but may be of interest.

### ***Retreats abroad with Simon Child in 2015***

For details see <http://w-c-f.org/Q367>

- Warsaw, Poland: 7-day Silent Illumination retreat, March 21–28
- Dharma Drum Retreat Center, USA: 9-day Silent Illumination retreat, May 22–31
- Dharma Drum Retreat Center, USA: 5-day Western Zen retreat, Oct 9–14

## News

WCF Admin secretary Hugh Carroll is getting married to Corinne Marsh next summer. We wish much happiness for them both.



## Twirl that pen!

### Please send us articles for The New Chan Forum

**Books:** We already have introductory articles on the following key texts, for future issues of the New Chan Forum: some core Pali Sutras; The Dao De Jing; The Platform Sutra. We would like to include in each issue articles like these which introduce a book that beginners read, like, perhaps, Zen Mind, Beginners Mind, Everyday Zen, or, Hoofprint of the Ox, by Master Sheng Yen. Please think about writing an introduction to a key text that is important to your Chan, a favourite which you return to again and again. The style need not be scholarly and might well be more persuasive if it is personal in tone. By all means discuss the idea with the editors.

**Images:** Artwork, photographs, poems, haiku and haibun would be very much appreciated.

**Articles:** Any other lively articles relevant to Chan learning and Chan living would be most welcome. We need to create The New Chan Forum for ourselves, in the way we want it to be. And please keep the retreat reports coming! They are very highly valued contributions to the understanding of the power of the retreat process.

If any of these things stimulate you then please contact the editors, Pat Simmons and George Marsh, who will be more than happy to discuss with you how any idea can be taken forward. They can be contacted at [editor@westernchanfellowship.org](mailto:editor@westernchanfellowship.org)

## Your Sangha Needs You!

Giving time will bring the Sangha closer together, and help our practice as a community to grow stronger and our roots to go deeper. So why not make it your New Year's Resolution, to give some time to help the WCF as part of your Bodhisattva practice? Please contact me, Doug Orton [volunteering@westernchanfellowship.org](mailto:volunteering@westernchanfellowship.org), to discuss possibilities.

Jobs and projects that members can get involved with:

- Website design and content management
- Photo gallery (Flickr/Picasa)
- Twitter/Pinterest account manager
- Transcribing, podcast creation, film making
- General administration
- 2016 Calendar design and distribution
- Book editing (we are releasing a book on Koans, and would like to hear from anyone with editing/copywriting experience)

As the volunteering co-ordinator, I'd like to personally thank all of the committee members for their time and hard work this year. Also, I'd like to thank the group leaders for their time and the following members for their valued contributions:

Catherine Burns (lift co-ordinator), Marilyn Janssen (sound editing), David Turner (podcasts), David Valentine-Hagart (bookings, mini-disc transfers), Jeanine Woodward, Felicia Chan and Catherine Burns (transcriptions), Pat Simmons and George Marsh (New Chan Forum), Sara Elloway (Gift Aid), Peter Jackson and Susan Millington (2015 calendar) and the WCF retreat leaders and committee members.

Wishing you a Happy Christmas and a fulfilling 2015!